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wanted, to take advantage of the efforts of such illustrious workmen, and raise an edifice, which will be the harbinger of union, independence, and regeneration, to that unfortunate people. The efforts the Italians of our days are making for a unity of language, literature, and history, are the best pledge they can give, of their being fitted for their emancipation. It is always by such a wise gradation, that the productions of arts, letters, and science, as well as the works of nature, are advanced to their greatest results.

The plan for the erection of the greatest of temples had long since been modelled and remodelled ; the treasures of more than one Pope had been lavished ; winters and summers had revolved over the rising aisles for more than half a century, before the Vatican felt the first impulse of that hand that was to start it into existence, — before, leaning upon the unwieldy piles heaped up by his predecessors, and taking his model from the works of creation, Michel Angelo raised to the firmament a firmament of marble.

ART. II. — *The Poetical Works of ROBERT SOUTHEY, collected by Himself.* In Ten Volumes. 16mo. London. 1837, 1838.

NONE of the elegant republications of the day have given us greater pleasure than this ; the rather, as it is not a monument to the memory of its eminent author, but has been undertaken by himself, at the beginning of his old age, as a suitable close of his long literary life. “ At the age of sixty-three,” he says, “ I have undertaken to collect and revise my poetical works.” Of those sixty-three years, he has passed forty-four in the public presence, as an active and voluminous author. His literary life thus covers more than a complete generation of men, and has witnessed the beginning and the ending of more than one of those distinguished lives, which have made the nineteenth century famous. During this period, Byron and Mrs. Hemans, to name no more, achieved their whole work of immortality, and even Walter Scott ran his entire race, having made his first publication some years after Southey's reputation was established.

So the laureate has stood, like some steady light in the heavens, while stars and meteors have risen and fallen around him. The older and the younger are gone, and he still lives, with a smooth brow and untremulous hand, not an old man though an old author, to set his works in order by a leisurely revision, and bring his poetical existence to a dignified conclusion.

It is a spectacle of peculiar interest. Excepting Scott, Southey has been the most prolific of the distinguished writers of his time, and, perhaps without exception, the author who has written successfully on the greatest diversity of subjects, from the most trivial to the most important, from the lightest to the most grave. Equally at home in literature, theology, and politics; an historian, biographer, critic, poet, essayist, and polemic; allowed on all hands to be one of the few masters of English prose, and second to few of the great names of modern English poetry; often offending in matters of taste, but never untrue to moral purity and religious faith; bigoted as a politician and a theologian, in both which characters he had forsaken the opinions and connexions of his youth, but liberal as a man, notwithstanding his violence as a partisan; always before the public eye as an author, but living in beautiful retirement from the world, in his own domestic and scholarly retreat; he is a man whom, in some features of his character, we could wish other than he is, but whose intrinsic worth commands respect. We cannot refuse to see that he is unequal, inconsistent, often puerile, sometimes absurd; but he is always conscientious, never forgetful of moral obligation, and occasionally great. If it were inquired who, among the distinguished men of modern letters, has written the silliest things, we should answer, with little hesitation, Southey; if asked, who among them has written the greatest, it would not be without a pause and a struggle, that we should prevail on ourselves to dismiss his claim. We are confident, that he has not yet received the measure of reputation which is his due. In the crowd of admirable works, which, during his career, have jostled each other in their claims for regard, the reading public have allowed their impatience at the littlenesses and the vexatious violations of good taste, which annoyed them in the self-complacent volumes of the bard of Keswick, to divert their attention from his sterling merits. Yet he has not wanted readers and ad-

mirers. Some of his writings have been extensively popular ; and we are confident, that this complete collection of his poetical works will find a hearty welcome, and will increase the number of his readers.

We should have been better satisfied with an edition of his poems, from which were excluded all the questionable trivialities of his earlier as well as his later days. But he republishes the whole, insisting, in one of his prefaces, that there is not a line which dying he should be ashamed of, and wish to blot ; and, in another, acknowledging that some of the pieces might more fitly be destroyed than reprinted ; “ not,” he says, “ for any disgrace which could be reflected upon him by the crude compositions of his youth, nor for any harm which they could possibly do the reader ; but, merely, that they might not cumber the collection.” He retains them in this edition, simply because, having been once published, “ pirated editions would hold out as a recommendation, that they contained what he had chosen to suppress,” and it was prudent to forestall that evil by reprinting them himself.

Agreeing with him, that the poems to which he refers had better been “ consigned to the flames,” we think, too, that he has done right in not excluding them from the present collection ; but we are not so easily satisfied with his course in regard to the correction of his earlier works. His method is, to arrange the pieces, as far as possible, in the order in which they were written, for the reason, that “ such order is useful to those who read critically, and desire to trace the progress of an author’s mind in his writings ;” yet he adopts a rule in the revision of his juvenile works, which contradicts this purpose. “ From these,” he says, “ the faults of diction have been weeded, wherever it could be done without more trouble than the composition originally cost, and than the piece itself was worth.” And, as regards one of them, “ Joan of Arc,” he tells us, that it has now been corrected throughout,

“ for the purpose of making it more consistent with itself in diction, and less inconsistent in other things with the well-weighed opinions of my maturer years. The faults of effort, which may generally be regarded as hopeful indications in a juvenile writer, have been mostly left as they were. The faults

of language, which remained from the first edition, have been removed, so that in this respect the whole is sufficiently in keeping. And for those which expressed the political prejudices of a young man, who had too little knowledge to suspect his own ignorance, they have either been expunged, or altered, or such substitutions have been made for them as harmonize with the pervading spirit of the poem, and are nevertheless in accord with those opinions which the author has maintained for thirty years, through good and evil report, in the maturity of his judgment as well as in the sincerity of his heart."

We certainly do not perceive how such thorough correction as this, extending both to "diction and opinions," can leave the work in a condition "to aid those who read critically, and desire to trace the progress of the author's mind." We have not been at the pains to collate the present with the earlier editions, and therefore cannot say, how far changes have been made ;* but it is clear, that the author has deliberately adopted a course, which deprives the chronological arrangement of his works of a large portion of its usefulness. How are we to judge of "the progress of an author's mind," if his early productions are altered by him in mature life, so as to conform to the opinions which he then holds ?

It is not, however, to all his juvenile pieces that this correcting process has been applied. The most celebrated, perhaps we should say notorious, of them, "*Wat Tyler*," composed at the age of nineteen, when his blood was hot with republican principles, and, after he had renounced them, freely used as a weapon of annoyance by his political adversaries, is here reprinted, partly in the spirit of bravado, just as it was written. The publication of this "notable drama" was at first made surreptitiously, twenty years after it was written. It obtained a far greater notoriety, through incidental circumstances, than its intrinsic merit or demerit could warrant ; and posterity will wonder at the extreme acrimony exhibited in the writings of the parties, who waged a warfare of petty personal annoyance and spite, on account of so ordinary a performance. The secret is found in the fact, that

* They may be judged of, we suppose, from the omission, which we have just now accidentally noticed, of this line ;

"*La Fayette*, name that *Freedom* still shall love."

the deadliest enmity is that of a party, which seeks to revenge apostasy ; as Southey says, "gentlemen thought proper to revile me, not for having entertained democratic opinions, but for having outgrown them." And he faces down the shame which they attempt to fix upon him, by printing the obnoxious thing, "just as it was written in the course of three mornings, in 1794 ; the stolen copy, which was committed to the press twenty-three years afterwards, not having undergone the slightest correction of any kind ;" and this he does, "that it may not be supposed I think it any reproach to have written it, or that I am more ashamed of having been a republican, than of having been a boy." This is capitally said ; but the tetchiness and virulence of his political feelings give sometimes an apparent contradiction to this cool assertion of indifference.

Another of his pieces, equally notorious with "*Wat Tyler*," though in a different way, makes its appearance under very different treatment, and in a manner somewhat instructive as to one side of our author's character. Everybody has read "*The Devil's Walk*," which has been printed and reprinted, times without number, as Professor Porson's. The pith and piquancy of some of the stanzas are sufficient to account for its popularity. It seems, however, that there was blunder or mystification in the affair. Coleridge printed the verses among his works, under the title of "*The Devil's Thoughts* ;" * assigning five of the stanzas to Southey, and claiming for himself the remaining twelve. But the authorship was still obstinately attributed to Porson, until declared to be Southey's, in a newspaper correspondence, which is quoted in these volumes and adopted as the truth. The lines, it is said, "were written by Mr. Southey one morning before breakfast, the idea having struck him while shaving ; they were subsequently shown to Mr. Coleridge, who, we believe, pointed some of the stanzas, and perhaps added one or two." This account is clearly irreconcilable with that of Coleridge, and leaves us entirely puzzled as to what is the fact. Is it possible, that both of these great men deceived themselves, and misremembered ? At any rate, here it appears with our author's mark on it ; but in such a questionable shape, that we are disposed to address it in the words

* Vol. II. p. 83.

used of old to one of the Devil's companions, — "If thou beest he ! but oh, how changed !" For the worthy author, tickled with the popularity of the piece, and apparently supposing that there cannot be too much of a good thing, has extended it to about four times its original length. The added stanzas are so little german to the rest, that they ruin the quaint felicity of the primitive piece, and turn a pleasant *jeu d'esprit*, which made everybody laugh, into heavy and tiresome doggrel, which nobody will read. He says, this was done in "sportive mood" ; but one rarely witnesses such melancholy merrymaking. And besides, the original portions of the piece are not left in their original state. Whoever the author may have been, of the whole or of any part, Southey uses the freedom of altering any part at his pleasure. A large proportion of the stanzas are somewhat altered, some of them essentially, and all, we think, without exception, are made worse. The spirit is taken out of them, and the point blunted. Let this be judged of by the two following instances.

"He saw a lawyer killing a viper,
On a dunghill hard by his own stable ;
And the Devil smiled, for it put him in mind
Of Cain and his brother Abel."

Altered thus ;

"Ho, quoth he, thou putt'st me in mind
Of the story of Cain and Abel.

The sting in the word *brother* is extracted.

Again ;

"He saw a cottage with a double coach-house,
A cottage of gentility ;
And the Devil did grin, for his darling sin
Is pride that apes humility."

Altered thus ;

"And he owned with a grin that his favorite sin
Is pride that apes humility."

And so on, and much worse. Three stanzas are omitted ; one poor one of Southey's own, and two of Coleridge's which were worth keeping. Perhaps this matter hardly deserves the room we have given to it. But we do not like explanations which

clear up nothing ; and we think there is nothing in these volumes which casts so strong a light on a certain infirmity of the author's nature, — namely, an inability to discern the difference between good and poor humor, so that he confounds the laughable and the ridiculous, and an equal inability to perceive that any thing can be ridiculous, which concerns himself or is done by him.

This explains the character of that large portion of his minor poems, which are intended to be humorous. Many of them are undoubtedly of that character ; their humor is rich and genuine ; it comes freely and unsought, from the overflowing good nature of a happy and self-complacent temper. But it unluckily happened, that Mr. Edgeworth once said to him, “ Take my word for it, Sir, the bent of your genius is for comedy.” We would not attribute too much to the influence of such a remark ; but Mr. Southey himself quotes it, as having made an impression on his mind, and we cannot doubt that it was one of the influences which prompted him to *try* to be facetious, and to manufacture, in cold blood, tales and descriptions, and forms of expression, which should sustain his character, as having a genius for comedy. The strained and awkward doings of his pen, in these attempts, are of so unhappy effect on his readers, that they are likely to forget the passages of natural, easy, quiet fun, which else would have been delightful. Some of his specimens of the heroi-comic are quite equal to any of that class that are to be met with.

The example of Walter Scott, in accompanying the republication of his works with auto-biographical prefaces, has been pleasantly followed in the present case. Each volume has its preface, narrating the circumstances under which its contents were written ; and some of the more important pieces have their own separate notices prefixed. Much interesting information respecting the author, and his works, and his friends, is thus furnished, from which it is easy to gather a connected history of his life and labors. It is that of a man, “ dipped in ink ” from his very earliest boyhood. The love of story and of verse seems to have been a sort of instinct with him, and to have filled his soul with visions of romance and fame. Hoole's translations of Tasso and Ariosto nourished in the boy a taste for the stirring and the marvellous,

and introduced him, at a very early period, to Spenser, whom he tells us he "took for his master." As he lisped in numbers, he caught something, as he thinks, from the older, and something from the contemporaneous writers. His schoolboy verses "savoured of Gray, Mason, and Warton"; his manner was affected by Akenside; he derived much benefit from Cowper, and more from Bowles; and from Dr. Sayers he learned to appreciate the rhythmical capacities of the irregular blank verse, which he used afterward in "*Thalaba*" and some of his minor poems. Thus imbued and heated with the poetic temper, it is not strange, that he longed to give it vent by the press as well as by the pen; and accordingly, in 1794, when he was only nineteen, and had just left school, he published at Bristol a little volume with the title, "*Poems, containing the Retrospect, &c. by Robert Lovell and Robert Southey.*" These were a few of the productions of his juvenile pen, the larger part of which he at different times consumed in the fire, "piles upon piles." His industrious habits, and his extraordinary facility in composition, must have caused them to grow as fast as they were destroyed. He had already written, in a retirement of six weeks, the preceding year, an epic poem on the story of Joan of Arc; it had been corrected and copied, and was now advertised as ready for publication. We find nothing in the prefaces on which he dwells with so much fondness as this poem. He relates the whole story of its composition and printing with most affectionate minuteness, and treats it, in all respects, as a doting father his first-born child. He is so solicitous for its honor and reputation, that now, when it has been forty-four years in the world, he employs himself in revising and altering it, as if still his own character depended on its good appearance. Some may smile at this; but it is natural and amiable. It was a great achievement for an Oxford scholar, in a summer vacation; he never afterward did any thing of which it was possible to feel so proud, or which was to have so important a bearing on his destiny.

"I was not a little proud of my performance. Young poets are, or at least used to be, as ambitious of producing an epic poem, as stage-stricken youths of figuring in *Romeo* or *Hamlet*. It had been the earliest of my day-dreams. I had begun many such; but this was the first which had been completed,

and I was too young and too ardent to perceive or suspect that the execution was as crude as the design." — Vol. i. p. xvii.

The poem thus "crudely conceived, rashly prefaced, and prematurely hurried into the world," was received with great favor, and subsequently passed through five editions. Much of its popularity was owing to its political tone, which favored the liberal tendencies of the day, and caused it to be immediately reprinted in this country. It was not without merit in itself; and, in comparison with the other new works of the same period, it had an attraction incomparably beyond any it could possess if published at this time, "when a work of the same class would attract little or no attention."

Before "Joan of Arc" went to press, the author had begun to discharge himself of another epic poem, on the discovery of America, by the Welsh prince, Madoc; a subject which he had fixed upon, and talked about, when a boy. The composition of this he renewed at Westbury, in 1798. This year he speaks of, as one of the happiest portions of his life. He was full of invention and activity. The smaller poems, as he wrote them, were sent off to Charles Lamb, and the portions of "Madoc," as they were composed, were read to Davy, with whom Southey was then in habits of intimate intercourse.

"We were within an easy walk of each other, over some of the most beautiful ground in that beautiful part of England. When I went to the Pneumatic Institution, he had to tell me of some new experiment or discovery, and of the views which it opened for him; and when he came to Westbury, there was a fresh portion of 'Madoc' for his hearing. Davy encouraged me with his hearty approbation during its progress; and the bag of nitrous oxide, with which he generally regaled me upon my visits to him, was not required for raising my spirits to the degree of settled fair, and keeping them at that elevation." — Vol. iv. p. x.

"Madoc" was finished on the 12th of July, 1799, and the next day "Thalaba" was begun. The subject for this poem had been in the author's mind for four years, and the materials for it had been gathering during that time. The writing was interrupted by ill health, and he went to the south of Europe for its recovery the next spring.

"Change of circumstances and of climate effected an immediate cure of what proved to be not an organic disease. A

week after our landing at Lisbon, I resumed my favorite work, and I completed it at Cintra, a year and six days after the day of its commencement."— Vol. iv. p. xii.

"*Thalaba*" was published before the author's return, the press being corrected by his friends, Davy and Danvers. It was less favorably received than "*Joan of Arc*" had been, though an immeasurably finer work. It was so wholly strange and original in its plan and style, that the critics and the readers were at fault; they had no rules or precedents to judge by, and found it much easier to laugh at what was puerile and seemed affected, than to enter into the spirit of the author's design and boldly allow the excellence of his novelties. His name was now coupled with that of Wordsworth, by those who looked only at the superficial resemblances to be found in the extreme simplicity of diction which each affected, and who did not care to observe their essential differences. But it is not always by essential differences that a classification is made; and Mr. Southey should not complain or wonder, that a set of writers, all of them departing from the settled models, and well agreeing in some obvious points of their revolutionary creed, should be, for convenience or for wit's sake, put together under a common name. As to the justice with which, having been so classed, they were described and treated, that is another affair; and it certainly required no little forbearance in them to stand by for twenty years, "while every tyro in criticism who could smatter and sneer, tried his 'prentice hand' upon the Lake Poets; and every young sportsman who carried a popgun in the field of satire, considered them as fair game."

"*Thalaba*" being published, the author returned to the revision of "*Madoc*," which he pursued with great care and deliberation, "thinking that it probably would be the greatest poem he should ever produce." With this view he travelled through Wales in the autumn of 1801, in order to perfect himself in the localities and scenery of that picturesque country. In 1803, he took up his abode at Keswick, where he has ever since resided. There, he says, in the latter end of this year, the work was resumed, "and twelve months were diligently employed in reconstructing it."

The work, thus studiously prepared, was printed in 1805; was immediately reprinted in two elegant octavo volumes in

America ;* was pronounced, by some of the critics, the greatest poem since "Paradise Lost," and enjoyed a deserved reputation in spite of some ill-natured criticisms.

While these larger works were in progress, the author had been amusing himself, by way of recreation in his more leisure hours, with the composition of a great variety of minor poems. Of these, three volumes were published, one in each of the years 1797, 1799, and 1805. Some of them were works of considerable pretension ; some, very slight and insignificant ; a few had the good fortune to be popular, and to become extensively known. Southey himself wished them to be considered "as the desultory productions of a man sedulously employed upon better things." These are reprinted, we presume all of them, in the present edition, as well as the contents of another little volume, published in 1815, and his various compositions as Poet Laureate. As he has advanced in life, he has written less and less of occasional and fugitive poetry, being absorbed in works of greater extent and of a different character. Indeed, he tells us, that the poetical impulse has ceased, and that "latterly the inclination has been so seldom felt, that it required an effort to call it forth."

"Madoc" being thus disposed of in 1805, he the next year resumed and finished another large poem, "The Curse of Kehama," which had been begun in 1801. Concerning this, he says,

"No poem could have been more deliberately planned, or more carefully composed. It was commenced at Lisbon, on the 1st of May, 1801, and recommenced in the summer of the same year, at Kingstown, in which 'Madoc' had been finished and 'Thalaba' begun. A little was added, during the winter of that year, in London. It was resumed at Kingstown, in the summer of 1802, and then laid aside till 1806, during which interval 'Madoc' was reconstructed and published. Resuming it then once more, all that had been written was recast at Keswick ; there I proceeded with it leisurely, and finished it on the 25th of November, 1809. It is the only one of my long poems of which detached parts were written to be afterwards inserted in their proper places."

We presume, that this disclosure of laborious diligence and

* In Boston, by Munroe and Francis, in semi-monthly parts, with engraved title-pages.

painful revision will surprise many readers, who have been unable to account for the frequency and multitude of our author's large works, except on the supposition of hasty and even precipitate publication. It seems, however, that he was accustomed to exercise a scrupulous fidelity in this respect ; and that, wherever he may have failed, it has been with thoughtful deliberation and mature reflection. A proper criticism of his works would suggest the same conclusion. There is another interesting fact, disclosed in the same preface ; that his several larger poems form a sort of series, each being one part of a plan, which is completed by the union of the whole.

“ While a schoolboy at Westminster, I had formed an intention of exhibiting the most remarkable forms of Mythology, which have at any time obtained among mankind, by making each the groundwork of a narrative poem.

“ The plan upon which I proceeded in ‘ *Madoc*, ’ was to produce the effect of machinery, as far as was consistent with the character of the poem, by representing the most remarkable religion of the New World such as it was, a system of atrocious priestcraft. It was not here, as in ‘ *Thalaba*, ’ the foundation of the poem, but, as usual in what are called epic poems, only incidentally connected with it.

“ When I took up, for my next subject, that mythology which Sir William Jones had been the first to introduce into English poetry, I soon perceived that the best way of treating it would be to construct a story altogether mythological. In what form to compose it was then to be determined. No such question had arisen concerning any of my former poems. I should never, for a moment, have thought of any other measure than blank verse for ‘ *Joan of Arc*, ’ and for ‘ *Madoc*, ’ and afterwards for ‘ *Roderick*. ’ The reason why the irregular rhymeless lyrics of Dr. Sayers were preferred for ‘ *Thalaba* ’ was, that the freedom and variety of such verse were suited to the story.

“ It appeared to me, that here neither the tone of morals, nor the strain of poetry, could be pitched too high ; that nothing but moral sublimity could compensate for the extravagance of the fictions, and that all the skill I might possess in the art of poetry, was required to counterbalance the disadvantage of a mythology with which few readers were likely to be well acquainted, and which would appear monstrous, if its deformities were not kept out of sight. I endeavoured, therefore, to combine the utmost richness of versification with the greatest free-

dom. The spirit of the poem was Indian, but there was nothing Oriental in the style."

"The Curse of Kehama" having been finished, on the 25th of November, 1809, he, the next week, December 2d, began "Roderick, the Last of the Goths"; and finished it, July 14, 1814, — an interval of four years and seven months. Of the history of the composition of this noble work, no particulars are given; but a letter from Hogg, "the Ettrick Shepherd," is quoted, which is well worth reading.

"I have read 'Roderick' over and over again, and am more and more convinced, that it is the noblest epic poem of the age. I have had some correspondence, and a good deal of conversation, with Mr. Jeffrey about it, though he does not agree with me in every particular. He says, it is too long, and wants *elasticity*, and will not, he fears, be generally read, though much may be said in its favor. I had even teased him to let me review it for him, on account, as I said, that he could not appreciate its merits. I copy one sentence of the letter he sent in answer to mine: —

"'For Southey I have, as well as you, great respect, and, when he will let me, great admiration; but he is a most provoking fellow, and at least as conceited as his neighbour Wordsworth. I cannot just trust you with his 'Roderick'; but I shall be extremely happy to talk over that and other kindred subjects with you; for I am every way disposed to give Southey a lavish allowance of praise, and few things would give me greater pleasure than to find he had afforded me a fair opportunity. But I must do my duty, according to my own apprehensions of it.'

"I supped with him last night, but there was so many people that I got but little conversation with him, but what we had was solely about you and Wordsworth. I suppose you have heard what a crushing review he has given the latter. I still found him persisting in his first asseveration, that it was heavy; but what was my pleasure to find that he had only got to the seventeenth division. I assured him he had the marrow of the thing to come at as yet, and in that I was joined by Mr. Alison. There was, at the same time, a Lady M—— joined us at the instant; short as her remark was, it seemed to make more impression on Jeffrey than all our arguments; — 'O, I do love Southey'! that was all.

"I have no room to tell you more. But I beg that you will not do any thing, nor publish any thing, that will nettle Jeffrey for the present, knowing as you do, how omnipotent he is with

the fashionable world, and seemingly so well disposed towards you."

Mr. Southey did not receive very graciously this proposal to propitiate the northern censor, and answered Hogg, as if he thought him a little officious. "Jeffrey crush the Excursion!" he exclaimed; "tell him he might as easily crush Skiddaw."

Since the completion of "Roderick," Mr. Southey has produced very little that is worthy of his fame. His muse seems to have fallen into her dotage. Whether the bays of the Laureateship, which he condescended to wear, are really mixed with poppy leaves or not, it is certain, that something stupefying has been mingled with all that he has done officially. Just at this date the tremendous wars of the French revolution came to a close with the fight at Waterloo, and Europe was witness to scenes, such as for grandeur and effect the world has rarely beheld. The overthrow of a terrible dynasty, the release of the civilized nations, the incarceration of the imperial prisoner at St. Helena, the assemblies of the crowned heads of all the great kingdoms at Paris and London, and a thousand more incidents of thrilling and sublime effect, would seem to offer to a poet capable of enthusiasm, such inviting and grateful themes, as could scarcely fail to make another Pindar. But though Southey was maddened by the eagerness with which he entered into the times, his madness had no poetry in it. He wrote an ode on the visit of the Allied Sovereigns to London, in blank verse, from which all enthusiasm as well as jingle was absent. He visited the field of Waterloo three months after the battle, and came home and wrote a long account in rhyme of his "Pilgrimage" thither, which would have been tolerable prose, if it had not been intolerable verse, — wordy and cold. He wrote on the marriage of the Princess Charlotte in a very similar strain. And when George the Third died, he finished the climax of all the fatuities of the official muse, by his "Vision of Judgment"; which was not "blasphemous," as it was declared to be, but simply puerile; being the failure of another attempt to introduce the ancient hexameter verse into our language, and still more signally a failure to produce an impressive and sublime description of the scenes to which a human spirit is introduced immediately after death. One would not have believed beforehand, that so complete a failure was possible.

After this, we are not aware that any royal verses have been attempted by our author. We suppose that King William and his times have been too democratic for his sympathy or his eulogy ; and, even if the vein of poetic adulation had not been exhausted on her grandfather, the accession of the youthful queen had too little of hope for the conservative bard, to induce him to take down his harp from the willows. There let it hang, never again to palsy the hand of genius with its torpedo wires, or turn to mockery the great events of national and royal fortune.

We have only to add the publication of the "Tale of Paraguay," in four cantos of Spenserian verse, in 1825, and two long ballads, called "All for Love," and "The Pilgrim to Compostella," in 1829, and we have completed the enumeration of the principal works which are collected in the volumes before us.

In order to judge fairly of a writer so copious and various, it is necessary to separate his works into classes, and form an opinion of each by itself. He may have failed in one direction and been successful in another ; *non omnia possumus omnes*. In the case before us, it is especially a duty to do this. If judged of by some of these volumes, the author would sink into insignificance ; while the due appreciation of others would assign him an exalted place. If he had written nothing but "Roderick" and "Thalaba," there would be no doubt in any mind that he is a poet of the first order, for none other could produce those extraordinary works. But the same judgment could not be passed upon the perusal of his innumerable ballads, epitaphs, eclogues, songs, sonnets, dramas, and what he calls "non-descripts." This varied assortment cannot be characterized in any general terms. Each parcel must be taken up by itself, and judged by its own merits ; and the ill opinion of any one sort must do nothing to prejudice the claims of another. But for such an investigation we have here no time or room. We can only say, that the reputation of the author rests on his larger works. A few of his smaller pieces are worthy of all praise, but a great proportion of them have little merit. They were chiefly written when he was very young, and bear the marks of an eager but unripe mind, easily excited and rapidly throwing off its excitement in a poetical form. A considerable number of them are ballads, founded on some ter-

rific or grotesque legend of vulgar superstition or the Catholic faith, in which witches and magicians, and especially the Devil, are the actors. It would have been hard to say, in regard to these, whether they were written in earnest or in jest, if the author had not expressed severe displeasure at one of them being styled mock-heroic. Undoubtedly, some of them are conceived in the true ballad vein, with a simplicity and truth which make them charming, and have secured their popularity. But others are mere doggerel, which we can just put up with, if allowed to regard them as extravaganzas; and perfectly insufferable, if the author insists on their being taken as specimens of the legitimate art. What especially surprises us, is, that he should have retained a taste for this sort of composition, even to his later years; the volume already noticed as printed in 1829, having for its contents nothing but certain long-winded ballads of his poorest manufacture, limping along in lame verses and still lamer prodigies, to the mere disgust of the impatient reader. We do not marvel, that his wife looked grave, as he tells us she did, with "more of reproof than of praise in her smile," when she found him, at the manly age of fifty-four, dealing out such trash for the amusement of his children; though the piece to which she especially objected, "The Young Dragon," is less obnoxious to censure than many others. It is a specimen of finished verse, and tells the story with an air of sly humor, which makes us enjoy it, childish as it is. The major part of the marvellous stories, which he has collected from the stores of monkish tradition, are too senseless to be read with any feeling but that of wonder that any man, to whom it was not assigned as a penance, could submit to versify them so poorly, or to versify them at all.

None of his minor pieces seem to us so good on the whole as his "English Eclogues." They are conceived with great truth, and are expressed in a style of manliness and simplicity, with many touches of unaffected pathos, and in a tone of high philanthropic morality. Similar praise may be given to some of the "Inscriptions" and "Occasional Pieces." Most of these are in the blank heroic verse. Blank also are many of his "Lyric Poems," even those which he wrote as poet laureate, on occasions of state and public rejoicing. In this he appears to have committed an error. The English accent does not form itself into lyric measures without

the aid of rhyme to mark its movement, and decide its rhythm for the ear. Without rhyme, it cannot be distinguished from ordinary blank verse. It is thus that "Thalaba" is written; the reader, aided by his eye, may observe the verse, but its peculiarity is for the most part undiscernible by the ear. And in short lyric pieces, in which the expression of tenderness or ardor, of pathos or triumph, is so much dependent on the palpable march of the verse, the whole artifice of the structure is in danger of being thrown away, when not made to tell by the recurrence of the rhyme. It is only by his rhyme, that the lyrist can beat time to his music. Great praise has been bestowed on Collins's "Ode to Evening," for the sweet and graceful melody of its stanza. Allowing it to be deserved, the piece has never been successfully imitated, and the result of all the experiments seems to be, that lyric poetry in blank stanzas is little consistent with the genius of the language.

The larger poems of Southey, which make pretension to something of epic dignity, are five in number, occupying each a volume in the present edition. He disclaims for them the title of epic, because, as he avers, it has been "degraded." This, however, is little to the purpose. If they belong to the class, they should be named accordingly. But the truth is, that the epic, strictly defined, is an obsolete form of the poetic art. It would not be acceptable at the present day. The change of manners, philosophy, and taste, demands a different representation; and it is because Southey has adapted himself to this change, not because the ancient form is "degraded," that his poems should not be called epic.

But, without elevating this into a question of importance, it is observable, that these five poems belong to two distinct classes, as unlike each other as if they had proceeded from the most opposite schools of art. "Joan of Arc," "Madoc," and "Roderick," are written in regular blank verse; their scenes lie within the limits of credible history, and they treat of human fortune, character, and passion, in accordance with the most moderate laws of poetic probability. "Thalaba" and "The Curse of Kehama," on the other hand, are tales of magic and supernatural life; the actors genii, sorcerers, and gods, as well as men; the incidents impossible, the *dénouement* incredible; the verse irregular, lawless, and strange, to correspond to the subject. It cannot be denied, that in each

class he has been eminently successful ; so much so, unlike as they are, that it is not easy to decide in which of the two his master-piece is to be found. " Roderick " and " Thalaba " undoubtedly stand at the head of the two divisions ; but which of these two is the superior, it would be hard to determine.

In remarking on the poems of the first class, we may observe, that they approach as nearly to the epic model as modern taste will allow. They are written in heroic blank verse, and a sustained tone of grave dignity. They treat historical subjects and personages. They are tales of national struggles and welfare, and of the achievements and fortunes of princes and brave men, intermingled with pictures of more private suffering, and the personal fate of distinguished and obscure individuals. The supernatural machinery, thought essential to the epic poem, finds a substitute in the religious sentiment, as existing among the personages who appear in the story, and forms a natural and effective ingredient ;— in " Joan of Arc," the excited enthusiasm of the heroine, and the devout chivalry of that wild era ; in " Madoc," the superstitious forms and rites of the savage Mexicans ; in " Roderick," all that is beautiful, picturesque, and pathetic in the opinions and ritual of the Romish church.

" Joan of Arc," as it was first in the order of time, so was never to be properly regarded as any thing more than a splendid promise, and has not been reared into any thing higher by all the careful emendation of its author in his riper years. In " Madoc " he made a great advancement. The story is various, fertile in character and incident, lying partly in the old world and partly in the new, rich in all the contrasts presented by sea and land, civilization and barbarism, Christianity and idolatry. It conducts the Welsh prince from the troubles of his native country, through his voyage over the ocean, to his happy settlement in America. It describes the struggles and wars of the young colony, the fortunes and superstitions of the aboriginal tribes, and the erection of the homes and altars of the new people in faith and peace. It may be said, that there is some lack of vigor in the conduct of the poem, and not sufficient compactness in the structure of the plot ; that the tone is too equably placid and gentle, without sufficient appeal to the more stirring emotions, or admixture of the powerful and grand. But such is the truth

of its pictures of nature and of man, such the vividness of descriptions, such the interest and probability of its incidents and the deep pathos of its subsidiary narrations, and, in a word, such the purity and sweetness of the whole, that the reader is led along, by a gentle but irresistible charm, from page to page, and comes to the end as if he had been listening to the true story of an old friend.

From "Madoc" to "Roderick," the advance is greater still. It is an amazing leap, from a poem simply good to one of the highest order. The author has attained a boldness and vigor, both in plan and in execution, of which the previous works contain few indications. As a specimen of versification, alone, it is deserving of all admiration. Harmonious, various, rich, expressive, it rises, in all the attributes of metrical composition, far above the tone of "Madoc." The writer has acquired a new sense of the affluence of the English tongue and the movement of English verse. Possibly, his manner may still be objected to as somewhat diffuse, and as needing an occasional terseness to give it variety and nerve. But the want is scarcely deserving of notice, and it is hardly just to name it as detracting from the merit of one of the most admirable pieces of sustained poetic diction in the language.

To the structure and order of the poem, the conduct of the story and the proportion of its parts, we give equal commendation. One does not know where to turn to find a plot more felicitous in its conception, or carried on with a more natural and satisfactory developement. It is simple in the extreme, with no perplexing involutions, no startling discoveries, no stage trick of unexpected surprises, no cutting of knots by an extravagant device for the purpose of getting over a previous extravagance ; but moves on in a dignified order, one event following another without confusion, and all tending to unfold the characters of the actors, and promote the progress of the story, which, without a moment's delay or pause, advances with a gradual but uniform increase of interest, without hurry, or bustle, or digression, till it ends in a natural and satisfying close. It is one of the neatest and cleverest specimens of the art of arranging a story, so as to put every thing precisely in its place, give every thing its proper proportions, and exclude every thing irrelevant, which the his-

tory of letters can furnish. This is great praise ; and we do not believe it can be gainsaid.

We are inclined to estimate no less highly the skill displayed in the more arduous tales of the second class of his larger poems, "Thalaba" and "The Curse of Kehama." In these there was a difficulty, almost insurmountable, lying at the very threshold. The nature of the narratives required him to reconcile his readers to the reception of the grossest absurdities and the most violent impossibilities, to familiarize them to monstrous and odious forms of superstition, and excite a sympathy with the most revolting scenes. How serious this preliminary difficulty was,* may be seen in the fact, that multitudes of readers have been deterred by it from the perusal of these poems, and assign the extravagance of the fictions as sufficient cause for turning away from them. Sometimes indeed, perhaps frequently, the strangeness of the measure, and the occasional peculiarities of the diction, are complained of ; but we suspect, that no one ever became familiar with either poem without being ready to say, with Henry Kirke White, that he would not, on any account, have had it written in any other verse, and becoming ready to excuse, if he could not approve, the passages of questionable taste. Nothing is easier, as Scott intimates in one of his letters, than to make these poems the subject of ridicule, burlesque, and satire ; matter for such treatment lies exposed on the surface, ready for the handling of all ; but whoever will go beneath the surface, and enter enough into the purpose and plan of the author to read him aright, will soon cease to feel annoyance from those superficial faults, and will be filled with admiration, ever increasing, at the proofs of power and genius which pervade the entire structure.

We are willing to delay a little on this part of our subject, because here it is that the real greatness of Southey is to be found, and yet precisely here it is also that he is likely to be always prejudged and misunderstood. It is likely to be taken for granted, as it has been, without adequate examination, that he has overstepped the legitimate boundaries of

* " 'Thalaba' consists of the most wild and extravagant fictions, and openly sets nature and probability at defiance. In its action it is not an imitation of any thing, and excludes all rational criticism as to the choice and succession of its incidents." Here the "Edinburgh Review" (Vol. I. p. 75.) expresses the difficulty we refer to, and confirms the prejudice in the minds of its readers.

fiction, and substituted extravagance for romance. But it should be kept in mind, that the degree of probability belonging to a fictitious narrative may oftentimes more depend on the skill of the narrator, than on the intrinsic character of the incidents ; and it is a proof of high genius in a poet, to reconcile us to events and scenes which we would not listen to in another narration. Is it not thus, that Shakspeare leads us through the “*Tempest*,” and the “*Midsummer’s Night’s Dream*,” — ay, and “*Lear*” too, and “*Hamlet*” ? It is the province and the test of genius to do this successfully ; and, instead of complaining that one has been so bold as to attempt it, we should simply ask, if he has succeeded in it. His very calling lies

“ In scenes like these, which, daring to depart
From sober Truth, are still to Nature true.”

As for the assertion, that magic, and sorcery, and fairies, and ghosts were once objects of the popular faith, and therefore rightfully used by the poets, but may be so no longer, because those superstitions have died out of the minds of men, — it appears to us to be nothing to the purpose. Are Homer, Ariosto, Shakspeare, and other ancient masters, any the less admirable to us, because the superstitions of which they treat are not now in being ? It is what those bards have done, not what we in our every-day life believe, that gives interest to those old poems. And, in point of fact, the supernatural personages and the strange traditions of “*Thalaba*” and “*The Curse of Kehama*,” are just as much objects of our faith, as those of the “*Æneid*” and “*Jerusalem Delivered*” ; — that is to say, not at all so in our common life, but, while submitting to the power of the poet, altogether so. The world of imagination is of no age, and men never depart from it. The poet *lives* in it ; when he speaks as a poet, he speaks of it ; and if he speak consistently, as one simply telling what his fancy beholds, then it is the same thing as regards his merit, and ought to be the same thing in our judgment, whether he wrote at a period when the vulgar mind held that imaginary world to be a real world, or whether he writes now, when everybody knows it is not real, and yet loves it not the less. It is still the home of the poet ; the domains of magic and superstition are still parts of his empire ; and the question is not whether Southey, or any other, has a right to

enter them, but whether he can exercise any power in them ; not whether he is at liberty "to call spirits from the vasty deep," but whether "they will come when he doth call for them."

Now we hold, that no man's incantations are more successful than those of Southey in the poems before us. So dexterously has he contrived the whole machinery, and arranged, and described, and employed the personages, that he makes every thing appear to the fair-minded reader perfectly natural, if not credible and probable. So remarkable is his power of throwing himself into the most impossible situations, that the reader, seeing him actually in them, ceases to think them impossible. So successfully does he invest the most impossible personages with the sentiments and feelings belonging to the place he assigns them, that the reader forgets, that such persons cannot be ; he indeed sees that they are, and why should he doubt his eyes ? And so he dwells on the story of their lot with the same interest that he gives to the beings of every-day life.

Now this is a wonderful power ; it is that of genius, and genius of no mean order. It excellently realizes the description given by Coleridge, when, having spoken of poems of two sorts, he adds, "In the one, the incidents and agents were to be, in part at least, supernatural ; and the excellence aimed at, was to consist in the interesting of the affections by *the dramatic truth of such emotions as would naturally accompany such situations supposing them to be real.*" It is to precisely this class that the poems in question belong ; and we doubt if any can be named which more thoroughly fulfil the condition laid down by the critic in the sentence just cited. In all the wonders through which they pass, and the extreme demand they make on the imagination, among scenes unfamiliar, and actors unhuman and superhuman, the dramatic consistency and propriety are never violated ; but every creature is true to the affections and principles which belong to his place, and which would command sympathy if it were real. As examples of what we mean, we appeal to that most exquisite episode in "Thalaba," of Laila and her father in the region of snow ; to the repentance and death of Maimuna ; and to the whole story of the father and daughter in the "Curse of Kehama," — so impossible and horrible, and yet made so probable and credible by the glorious loveliness of

that sweet union of parent and child, that we go with them through all vicissitudes on earth and in heaven and in hell, participate in their anxieties and trials, and burst into tears at their final triumph, no more doubting that it is all a solemn reality, than the story of our own lives. It is vain to talk of extravagance, impossibility, or bad taste ; the poet has conquered ; and it is the victory of a great genius.

In closing this cursory survey of the works before us, we are disposed to state, a little distinctly, the impression which is left on our mind of the characteristic traits of their voluminous and various author. And we would say, that as we have now turned over these ten volumes of his collected poems, we have been struck with the originality which belongs to them. They are his own, borrowed from nobody, imitated from nobody. Such as they are, good, bad, and indifferent, they stand by themselves, unrelated, of no school, ancient or modern. It was an objection, brought against him at the beginning of his course by some of the critics, that he departed from the approved classical models, that "he followed in the footsteps of no predecessor," that he ventured on untried methods and on unauthorized subjects. At the present day, we perceive no force in an objection, which was of weight only with those who were then standing on the border line between the old and the new era. Their habits and tastes had been formed on the staid mediocrity of the preceding half century, and they were alarmed at the prospect of a revolution. We are now rather disposed to give honor to Southey for his independence, in being so early to perceive and help forward a change which the state of letters demanded. We praise him for adopting a manner of his own, fettering himself by no model, inventing new topics, and executing them in a new way. It came to pass, indeed, that he committed errors, confounded deformities with beauties, and set an equal value on whatever was his own. Like most bold men who start a new method, he indulged a pleasant self-complacency, took no pains to conceal his contempt of those who did not like his novelties, and allowed himself no misgiving in his appeal to the judgment of posterity. This we may lawfully smile at ; there can be no doubt, notwithstanding, that to this spirit he largely owed his success.

The fertility of his invention is to be next observed, proof of which is to be seen in the great number and variety of his

works. No man repeats himself less. No man has sent forth a succession of works more different from each other. If "Madoc" had been anonymous, who would have referred it to the author of "Thalaba"? or if "Roderick," who would have ventured to call it an imitation of "Madoc"? and who would have guessed the "Tale of Paraguay" to be of the same parentage with either? It is not easy to conceive of a more determined diversity; and this establishes his claim to the title of an inventor, or poet, — this variety of incident, character, plot, style, so easily and successfully maintained as to appear the result of a spontaneous act of the mind rather than of express effort or studious art.

As to his style, which, as the great instrument of the poet, demands to be especially considered, its characteristics are mainly simplicity, melody, diffuseness, and the sweetness and grace, with an occasional languor, which belong to or result from those qualities. The higher and bolder qualities of concise strength, nervousness, and splendor, are rarely exhibited. Sometimes, indeed, there is a display of magnificence and of almost gorgeous amplification, as no one can deny who remembers the descriptions of Baly and of Padalon, in the "Curse of Kehama"; but its usual character is that of calm and wordy gentleness, so uniform and placid, that we sometimes impatiently wish for a pithy and abrupt expression, to break in upon the luxurious monotony of the "linked sweetness long drawn out." We say this with special allusion to his blank verse; and yet, when we remember the power of his description and narrative, we are almost tempted to recall our remark, and to say, that the diffuseness we refer to, is only an elegant and expressive copiousness. At any rate, we speak of it as observers, rather than as fault-finders. And we must add, that his diction is far more exalted, picturesque, and expressive in his later than in his early works; as any one may see, by comparing "Roderick" with "Madoc," and "The Curse of Kehama" with "Thalaba." It is a natural consequence of this copiousness of style, that he possesses little of the curious felicity of phrase, so valued in the poet, the happy combination of choice and pregnant terms, conveying a pointed thought in a pointed sentence, which sparkles like a diamond, and is as precious. This is that exquisite gift which makes a poet live in the memory of his readers, by attaching to their minds a thousand precious gems of expression. Snatches of

Shakspeare there are, which make part of the language of conversation ; and scarcely a book is printed, but draws its most apt and illustrious mottos from his pages. In everybody's mouth, too, are phrases and maxims from Milton, Pope, Gray, and other and later bards. But of all this Southey furnishes hardly any thing. His thoughts do not clothe themselves in burning words. They are expanded, not compressed ; diffused, not concentrated ; no diamond, though ample store of gold ; and this not in bars or ingots, but beaten, — sometimes too thin. One is frequently struck with a fine thought or a noble image, but never in such guise that it haunts him afterward like a strain of delicious music, and will not be gone ; and if he seek to impress it on his memory, he soon finds that the *words* to which the poet has attached it are unessential, it readily escapes from them, and is content to carry away the sense and forget the expression.

If one, therefore, were making up a collection of the " Beauties of Southey," it is to passages of extended description and sentiment that he would have recourse ; and of these he might find abundance, unsurpassed in their kind for elegance and sweetness. Some of them are familiar to all readers ; as that beautiful passage beginning, " They sin who tell us love can die." Many such may be selected from these volumes ; to name no other, we do not know that there can be found any thing more graceful, than the manner in which a scene of passionate emotion melts away into tranquillity at the close of the twenty-first book of " Roderick."

" Soothed by the strain

Of such discourse, Julian was silent then,
And sate contemplating. Florinda too
Was calmed. If sore experience may be thought
To teach the uses of adversity,
She said, alas ! who better learned than I
In that sad school ! Methinks if ye would know
How visitations of calamity
Affect the pious soul, 't is shown ye there !
Look yonder at that cloud, which through the sky
Sailing alone, doth cross in her career
The rolling moon ! I watched it as it came,
And deemed the deep opake would blot her beams ;
But, melting like a wreath of snow, it hangs
In folds of wavy silver round, and clothes

The orb with richer beauties than her own,
Then, passing, leaves her in her light serene.

Thus having said, the pious sufferer sate,
Beholding with fixed eyes that lovely orb,
Till quiet tears confused in dizzy light
The broken moonbeams. They too by the toil
Of spirit, as by travail of the day,
Subdued, were silent, yielding to the hour.
The silver cloud diffusing slowly past,
And now into its airy elements
Resolved is gone ; while through the azure depth
Alone in heaven the glorious Moon pursues
Her course appointed, with indifferent beams
Shining upon the silent hills around,
And the dark tents of that unholy host,
Who, all unconscious of impending fate,
Take their last slumber there. The camp is still ;
The fires have mouldered ; and the breeze which stirs
The soft and snowy embers, just lays bare
At times a red and evanescent light,
Or for a moment wakes a feeble flame.
They by the fountain hear the stream below,
Whose murmurs, as the wind arose or fell,
Fuller or fainter reach the ear attuned.
And now the nightingale, not distant far,
Began her solitary song ; and poured
To the cold moon a richer, stronger strain
Than that with which the lyric lark salutes
The new-born day. Her deep and thrilling song
Seemed with its piercing melody to reach
The soul, and in mysterious unison
Blend with all thoughts of gentleness and love.
Their hearts were open to the healing power
Of nature ; and the splendor of the night,
The flow of waters, and that sweetest lay
Came to them like a copious evening dew
Falling on vernal herbs which thirst for rain."

His power of description is another characteristic. He greatly excels in the vivid, graphic delineation of scenes and persons. His descriptions are pictures. As one of his early reviewers remarked, "he describes with all the apparent truth of ocular testimony."* Our memory of the scenes which he has depicted is like our recollection of those at which

* General Repository and Review, Vol. I. Cambridge, 1812.

we have been personally present ; we look back to the story of Oneiza, Laila, Adosinda, more as if we had been with them, than as if we had only read of them. Moath's tent is a real place to us, and we cannot rid ourselves of the impression that we were in the crowd at Arvalan's funeral. From this cause the writings of Southey are singularly adapted for illustration by the painter and engraver ; situations and attitudes are conceived with such vividness, and portrayed with such force, that it is to the artist almost as if he had the actual persons before him. The *Edinburgh Review* allowed this in the case of "Thalaba," saying, that "no poem has a greater number of lively images, or would afford so many subjects for the pencil." The spirit of the remark may be extended to all his poems ; and we cannot but wonder that they have not been seized upon by the artists as treasure-houses of beautiful and magnificent design. For instance, to take the first example out of fifty which occur to us, what a capital picture would Allston make of Roderick, kneeling before the old monk :

"Then Roderick knelt

Before the holy man, and strove to speak.
Thou seest, he cried, . . thou seest, . . but memory
And suffocating thoughts repress the word,
And shudderings, like an ague fit, from head
To foot convulsed him ; till at length, subduing
His nature to the effort, he exclaimed,
Spreading his hands and lifting up his face,
As if resolved in penitence to bear
A human eye upon his shame, . . Thou seest
Roderick the Goth ! That name would have sufficed
To tell the whole abhorred history :
He not the less pursued, . . the ravisher,
The cause of all this ruin ! Having said,
In the same posture motionless he knelt,
Arms straightened down, and hands outspread, and eyes
Raised to the Monk, like one who from his voice
Expected life or death."

Or the following, though it contains one admirable point, which does not address itself to the eye.

"Thus while the hero spake, Witiza stood
Listening in agony, with open mouth,
And head, half-raised, toward his sentence turned ;
His eyelids stiffened and pursed up, . . his eyes

Rigid, and wild, and wide ; and when the King
Had ceased, amid the silence which ensued,
The dastard's chains were heard, link against link
Clinking. At length upon his knees he fell,
And lifting up his trembling hands, outstretched
In supplication, . . Mercy ! he exclaimed, . .
Chains, dungeons, darkness, . . any thing but death ! . .
I did not touch his life."

One of the most observable traits in the works of this author, is his delight in illustrating the gentler affections, and the sober pleasures of domestic life. He does not avoid the vehement, harsh, and bold ; but he turns, with preference, to the mild and humble. He loves the fireside. He is best satisfied when depicting the amiable relations of brother and sister, parent and child. This has been made a ground of complaint and disparagement with some of the critics ; and it might be regarded as a defect, if he had proved himself equal to nothing else. But, after being excited by his scenes of violence and wrath, by his pictures of magic and revenge, of jealousy, remorse, and war, we esteem it matter of congratulation, that the author is disposed to retreat, with evident delight, into the sanctuary of home, and give his feelings refuge amid the sacred affections of domestic privacy. There are poets enough for the hero and the prince, for the passionate lover and the despairing knight. What is public, tumultuous, and ostentatious, will always find pens ready to commemorate and adorn it. Let there be one, at least, to appreciate the holiness of the fraternal bond, as in *Thalaba* ; the beauty and worth of the filial affection, as in *Laila and Kaylyal* ; to celebrate the loveliness and power of maternal influence, as in *Rusilla and Roderick*, and the charm of the complete domestic ring, as in the family of *Pelayo*. The world will lose nothing by turning its sympathies away from kingdoms and ambition, to families and childhood ; and the poet who knows how to do this, is to be esteemed a benefactor.

Mr. Southey does not stop here. There is a close connexion between this class of affections and the religious sentiment, and he passes constantly into the latter. He writes like a man whose habitual devoutness of temper associates all scenes with spiritual thoughts, discerns the moral uses of whatever occurs, and interprets all by a reference to some

providential order. His poetry, accordingly, is not simply innocent and pure, but directly and persuasively religious. The tendency, the very moral, of each of his greater works is expressly favorable to faith and piety ; three of them might, with no impropriety, be styled religious allegories ; and rarely are the highest virtues more affectingly taught. A distinguished critic, apparently incapable of sympathy with any expression of religious sentiment, speaks of his poetry as "outrageously religious and fanatical." We may pardon his injustice in pity for his ignorance. He who knows what faith and devotion are, would rather esteem it as beautifully illustrative of that deep and glowing, but calm and steadfast principle of rational trust and filial piety, which especially becomes a creature like man. He would see in it nothing overwrought, nothing unduly enthusiastic, but a just delineation of that spirit which is equally distant from coldness and excess. With this spirit his best works are imbued ; it sheds light and beauty over their pages ; it clothes them with peculiar tenderness, purity, and grace ; and, when occasion offers, it breaks forth, in distinct and prominent expression, as if the spontaneous breath of the author, who could not but utter the language familiar to his heart.

Without making any comparison between this poet and his distinguished contemporaries, without wishing that they had received less honor, or attempting to decide his relative rank among them, we yet cannot refrain from declaring our wonder, that a higher place in the public estimation has not been assigned to Southey. It would avail nothing to prophesy, that so gifted an author cannot be kept for ever in undeserved neglect, for we do not believe that the present celebrity of writers is a fair test of their absolute or relative merit ; but we may express a strong hope that less injustice may be done in time to come, and that some of the attention now wasted on frivolous and demoralizing publications, may be given to the principal works of this equally entertaining and never corrupting writer. It is mortifying, that, amid the infinity of reprints from the British shops, no place has been found for these. It is time that it were otherwise.
